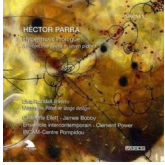


Hector Parra - Hypermusic Prologue (A Projective Opera in Seven Planes) [2010]

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 16 June 2012 17:24 - Last Updated Sunday, 09 March 2014 10:33

Hector Parra - Hypermusic Prologue (A Projective Opera in Seven Planes) [2010]



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Charlotte Ellett – soprano James Bobby – baritone Ensemble Intercontemporain Clement Power – conductor

Hypermusic Prologue: A projective opera in seven planes, with an English libretto by Harvard physics professor Lisa Randall and music by Spanish composer Hèctor Parra, has a plot that is conventionally operatic -- a struggle of lovers to overcome the obstacles that separate them. The opera, though, is an exceptionally high-concept work, so prolix that only listeners who are conversant in the most advanced developments in speculative physics have a chance of fully appreciating its subtleties. The creators certainly are trying to communicate with their audience, as attested by the copious program notes (including pages of mathematical formulae and samples of the score), and the inclusion of a bonus CD nearly as long as the opera itself in which they attempt to explain it. They do state that their intent is not to impart information but to

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give the audience a moving theatrical experience and they are successful at that. Given the hyper-abundance of largely impenetrable explanatory information provided, it's perhaps astonishing that the opera has a fairly clear and comprehensible emotional trajectory and a narrative that can be apprehended by laypeople in its broad strokes, if not in its specifics. A composer/physicist (soprano) is driven to abandon her lover (baritone) and explore the Fifth Dimension, beyond the three spatial dimensions where he remains trapped. The Fourth Dimension is time and the Fifth Dimension has to do with extended concepts of music, which Parra expresses through the electronic manipulation and distortion of the voice and by requiring the singer to produce extended vocal techniques that are notated with excruciatingly precise demands. Parra makes it possible to hear the difference between the Third and Fifth Dimensions, so the conflict between the lovers has real emotional impact and their reconciliation in pursuit of higher realities at the end is meaningfully resonant and cathartic. The opera received a terrific 2009 production from the Kairos ensemble Ensemble InterContemporain and IRCAM-Centre Pompidou, which pulled out all the stops to give the opera the musical and scenic impact its creators intended. Clement Power leads singers Charlotte Ellet and James Bobby and Ensemble InterContemporain in a compelling, beautifully sung performance. The sound, as would be expected from anything produced at IRCAM, is immaculate and brilliantly vivid. This is not a piece likely to appeal to broad audiences, but there is plenty here to engage and stimulate fans of electronic music and cutting-edge new opera. --- Stephen Eddins, Rovi

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